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O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 LAGOS 000014

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STATE PASS NSC FOR BOBBY PITTMAN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PM](#) [EPET](#) [ECON](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NIGER DELTA TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEMBER
DETAILS CONTENTS OF REPORT

Classified By: Consul General Donna M. Blair, Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

11. (U) Summary: Acting Consul General met on December 23 with Tony Uranta (protect throughout), a member of the Niger Delta Technical Committee and campaign manager for the 2007 presidential campaign of Patrick Utomi, Dean of the Lagos Business School. According to Uranta, the Technical Committee's subcommittee on illegal bunkering identified the late Shehu Yar'Adua as the biggest illegal bunkerer whose interests were inherited by his brothers, and managed by his friend former Vice President Atiku Abubakar with the complicity of the Intels Nigeria Limited oil services company. This large scale bunkering is tied to arms dealing, Uranta said. Most of the kidnapping that has been done in the Niger Delta has not been done by Niger Deltans but by individuals from outside the region. The Technical Committee recommended that the Federal Government grant amnesty to any Niger Deltan who turns in his weapons, leaves the camps and reenters civil society within six months; anyone found with a weapon after that time should be treated as a criminal, Uranta said the Committee recommended. The Technical Committee also called for a fair and open trial for Henry Okah. Uranta's appointment to the Niger Delta Technical Committee is testimony to his stature as someone knowledgeable about the region and its problems. Independent of the Technical Committee, Uranta has succeeded in pulling together respected people into new groups to advocate for the Niger Delta, and despite his disclaimers, all have achieved some modest success in getting their views into the local press. Whether or not the result of Uranta's efforts, since the Niger Delta Technical Committee's report was presented to the President, a steady stream of voices has been heard calling for the President to implement the Technical Committee's recommendation. It remains to be seen what response the President will make to the report. End Summary.

12. (C) Acting Consul General met on December 23 with Tony Uranta, a member of the Niger Delta Technical Committee and campaign manager for the 2007 presidential campaign of Patrick Utomi, Dean of the Lagos Business School. Uranta said that when the Technical Committee presented the President with its report, it asked him to put out a white paper responding to the recommendations so as to give the Niger Delta a message of hope. They told the President that if the government did not make the report public by January 1, the Technical Committee would feel at liberty to release it themselves. (Note: Although there have been numerous newspaper articles about the report, it has not yet been

released publicly. End Note) The President told them that he would act on the report "if he finds it acceptable". The members of the Technical Committee know that the President's style is slow, but they also anticipate that the President will not do what has been requested; Uranta himself is "under no illusions that the government will lift a finger to help the Niger Delta." Uranta said that a reappraisal of the situation would begin if no white paper issues by January 1.

13. (C) To that end, Uranta said, a Niger Delta roundtable would be held on January 2 in Port Harcourt. Uranta told Acting CG on January 5 that the conference actually was held.

In attendance was a broad range of influential Nigerians, including Alhaji Maro Shinkafe (sic), a member of the Northern establishment, former chief intelligence officer and presidential candidate; Joseph Wayas (sic), Governor of the Southern District during the Second Republic; Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, and Patrick Utomi. Some militants were also be at the event; they attended because Uranta was "the voice of the communities", including the restive and armed youths, on the Technical Committee, arranging for the Committee to visit Camp 5 to talk to Tom Polo, and for Asari, Fara, Boyloaf and others not only to meet but to submit memoranda. However, the event had to be held behind closed doors because PDP Governor Rotimi Amaechi, the roundtable's sponsor, was told by Abuja that his sponsorship of a public event would not be welcome.

Subcommittee Submits Report on Illegal Bunkering

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14. (C) A subcommittee of the Niger Delta Technical Committee looked at the question of illegal bunkering and created its own subcommittee report, which was tendered to the President with the full report. The Technical Committee concluded that militants conduct no more than 15 percent of all illegal bunkering. To come to that conclusion, the Subcommittee members met with former Bayelsa Governor Dipreye Alamaseigha, with major bunkerers who have "fallen out" with powerful interests, and with retired admirals and generals. Uranta claimed that the late Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, the President's brother, had been the "biggest" bunkerer; when he died, his holdings were taken over by his brothers but managed on their behalf by his close personal friend, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, through the Intels group. (Note: Intels Nigeria Limited, run by Italian nationals, in 1982 began the development of the Onne Oil and Gas Free Zone's Federal Ocean Terminal in Rivers State. The company subsequently developed the Onne Oil and Gas Free Zone's Federal Lighter Terminal, as well as facilities at Warri Port in Delta State and the Calabar New Port in Cross Rivers State. End Note)

15. (C) Large scale bunkering is tied to arms dealing, as is the Federal Government's enormous security budget for the Niger Delta, Uranta said. The crisis in the Niger Delta is a purposeful crisis that benefits the politicians, those engaged in oil theft, and Nigeria's own "military-industrial complex" which includes arms dealers, Uranta said. It is in the interests of these people to make it appear that the Niger Delta problem is intractable. As a result, they prop up the militants, including some who have an ideological basis for their actions.

Technical Committee on Amnesty, Kidnappings

16. (C) The Technical Committee also looked at the issues of amnesty and kidnapping. The Technical Committee's idea of amnesty would require that the militants hand in their weapons within three to six months of the announcement of the plan, leave the camps and re-enter society; if they do so, they will get amnesty. However, if after six months they are caught with weapons, they will be treated as criminals. With

regard to the kidnappings that have occurred in the Niger Delta, most has not been by Niger Deltans but by individuals from other parts of the country. The Committee put this in their report, and also made the information available to Mike Okiro, Inspector General of Police. Okiro, Uranta said, was shocked when he received the information; but Technical Committee members realized that their findings would not be entirely welcome in government circles, Uranta said. Although it is true that the majority of youths in the Niger Delta who are armed are of the Ijaw ethnicity, they do not get involved in kidnapping; most of the kidnappers are from outlying states, Uranta claimed. For example, in a recent kidnapping of twins, the kidnappers came from Kwara, Oyo and Abia States, he said. The Niger Delta youths who are involved in criminal activities have gravitated to Rivers State. Following the 2007 clampdown in Port Harcourt, the criminal militants fled the urban areas of the state. Governor Amaechi, who Uranta called his friend, is pressing on Ateke Tom and has succeeded in pushing him out of the areas he once dominated.

Disciplined Militants Get Foreign Training

17. (C) According to Uranta, disciplined Niger Delta militants have had foreign technicians teaching them the use of plastique, and training them to upgrade their skills; while the undisciplined militants are the ones who allow themselves to be filmed by CNN, Uranta said. "Large conglomerates" are sponsoring the training, and the trainers are ex-military people, Uranta said the Technical Committee found. Asked whether the committee's report will name the arms dealers and sponsors of the trainings, Uranta demurred; the Technical Committee had access only to Nigerians, so was unable to get the names. However, Uranta said, there are people from Asia and the Middle East involved.

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MEND: "With or Without Okah, We Will Continue"

18. (C) Acting Consul General asked where Henry Okah fits into the picture. Henry started as a small time person, Uranta said, but he created a mystique about himself. When Asari was put in prison, what had formerly been a single chain of command turned into a scramble for power. As people sought to impress on the government the need to release Asari, they turned to Henry Okah who acted as spokesperson. Henry had always been involved in arms, and used the information he gained to break ranks. He began to supply arms to all the militant leaders, cultivating their loyalty by allowing them to buy arms without putting up front money. Henry taught the boys to make money in new ways. In the past, they had been the pilots and guards for the bunkering barges, but Henry told them they could be barge owners, be their own bosses. As the foot soldiers saw their leaders become generals, they broke away, until now there are 300 camps, each doing what it can to survive. Currently, major leaders are Asari and Tom Polo; the rest are small, in control of only a single camp, Uranta said.

19. (C) There are people loyal to Henry in Bayelsa, Rivers and Akwa Ibom, but the people of Delta, Edo and Ondo States are loyal to Tom Polo. Former Delta State Governor James Ibori and current Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan use government funds to pay off the boys by allowing them to guard the waterways. But the problems have been exported to Bakassi, Akwa Ibom and even found their way back to Delta State, where the MT Akua was recently highjacked, Uranta said. (Note: Uranta seems to imply that some of the Delta State youths engaged in guarding the waterways are also engaged in criminal activities in other states. End Note)

10. (C) The military are also major players in the bunkering because without their acquiescence nothing could go through

the creeks. Three retired admirals are bunkerers, Uranta claimed, and Henry's brother witnessed the purchase of arms from top military personnel; an open trial for Henry Okah would bring those names into the open. The Technical Committee recommended that Okah, who has been accused of treason, recommended that the trial be open, free and fair. moreover, Okah should be out on bail; Asari Dokubo, Gani Adams (Note: Coordinator of the Odua People's Congress. End Note) and Ralph Uwazuruike (Note: Leader of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, MASSOB. End Note) have all been accused of treason, yet all are out on bail. According to Uranta, MEND recently announced that "with or without Henry Okah, we will continue the revolution." This shows, Uranta said, that MEND has moved beyond Okah. (Note: Post can find no indication that MEND made such a statement publicly. End Note)

thnicities, Professionals, Nobel Laureates
Band Together for the Niger Delta

¶11. (C) Uranta noted that he originated the United Niger Delta Energy, Development, Security Strategy (UNDEDSS). Uranta said UNDEDSS is an organization made up of all ethnicities in the Niger Delta region. Unlike the Southwest geopolitical zone, dominated by the Yoruba ethnicity, or the Southeast, dominated by the Igbo ethnicity, the South-South is home to numerous ethnicities, including the Ijaw, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ogoni, Ebibio, Efik and others. He envisioned UNDEDSS as a counterpart to the Afenefere socio-cultural group that speaks for the Yoruba, the Ohanaeze socio-cultural group that speaks for the Igbo ethnicity, and the Arewa socio-cultural group that speaks for the Northern ethnicities. 2007 Presidential candidate and Dean of the Lagos Business School Patrick Utomi is President of UNDEDSS, and Uranta is Secretary General. The group has established an Elders Council which includes Chief E.K. Clark, Michael Ibo (phon), and Joseph Wayas (phon).

¶12. (C) Prior to founding UNDEDSS, Uranta pulled together a group called South-South Professionals, whose members include George Etomi, Vice President of the Nigerian Bar Association; Bismarck Rewane (Note: Managing Director of Financial

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Derivatives, Limited. End Note); Charles Okah, Henry's brother; Tony Ani, Finance Minister under military President Sani Abacha; Harcourt Aduki (sic), Honorary Consul for Canada; Ann-Kio Briggs (Note: former spokesperson, Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force and now head of an NGO. End Note); Ebiba DonPedro (Note: who won a 2003 CNN award for a story on the Niger Delta. End Note); Ebim Semintary (sic), Publisher of BusinessEye. Adams Oshiomhole, before he was sworn in as Governor, was Secretary of the organization, Uranta said. Only a few of these people are independently wealthy; UNDEDSS survives from the contributions of these working professionals.

¶13. (C) Uranta said he also originated the group Nobel Laureates for the Niger Delta, the first of several groups of Nobel laureates focused on conflicts around the world. Uranta is aware that the various groups he has organized have limited media reach. Nonetheless he is trying to build institutions that help the fragmented Niger Delta speak with one voice, and that are capable of monitoring the process of governance as a check on corruption. UNDEDSS and South-South Professionals share an office in Port Harcourt with Environmental Rights Action. Uranta shares the group's concern, as do many Niger Deltans, about climate change. His home village has lost 300 meters to the sea in the last few years.

¶14. (C) Comment: Uranta's appointment to the Niger Delta Technical Committee is testimony to his stature as someone knowledgeable about the region and its problems. Uranta has succeeded in pulling together respected people into new groups to advocate for the Niger Delta, and despite his

disclaimers, all have achieved some modest success in getting their views into the local press. Whether or not the result of Uranta's efforts, since the Niger Delta Technical Committee's report was presented to the President, a steady stream of voices has been heard calling for the President to implement the Technical Committee's recommendation. It remains to be seen what response the President will make to the report.

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